

The Crafty MILLER; or, Mistaken BATCHELOR

PART I.

YOU gallants of ENGLAND, I pray now draw near,
And a comical story to you I will tell;
'Tis of a rich batchelor now I do write,
Who had store of riches his heart to delight;
But among his livings my author can tell,
He had in possession a fine water-mill.
And in it an honest poor miller did dwell,
Who by his just dealings to poverty fell.
For fortune did frown, as it doth appear,
He could pay to no rent for the space of two year:
But the landlord was civil, and made no great strife,
Because the miller had a handsome wife.
One morning the landlord comes to the mill,
Saying, Miller, good-morrow: is your wife well?
Yes, sir, says the miller, she's hearty I think,
But grieved because she can pay you no chink;
But if you'll have patience, as I am a man,
I will give you the rent, sir, as soon as I can.
Prithee, miller, for money I do want none,
Until I do ask you, you may let it alone;
Come, go to the tavern, it is my design,
To give you the share of a bottle of wine.
I have something to say, if you'll grant my desire,
I'll quit you the rent, and make you much higher.
Kind sir, said the miller, your proffers are high,
I ne'er shall be able you to gratify.
Yes, that you may quickly, his landlord reply'd,
With your free consent I am soon satisfy'd.
In truth, said the miller, if it can be so,
My willing endeavours you soon shall know.
I thank thee, kind miller, the landlord reply'd.
Being come to the tavern, he merrily cry'd
Come bring us a bottle of wine that is good,
And, miller, if you will but stand to your word,
I mean to surrender, with heart and good will,
The rent that you owe me, and likewise the mill.
And now honest miller, my mind I'll disclose,
Altho' 'twill seem strange to you I suppose.
Yet nevertheless, the truth to discover,
Unto your dear wife I am a brisk lover.
If you will consent I may lie by her side,
I shall be the happiest of men, he cry'd.
Kind sir, said the miller, I grant thy desire,
My wife's at your will when you please to lie by her.
I should be the worst of men, he reply'd
If such a small boon to you was deny'd.
I freely consent, sir, you shall have your will,
But first we'll have writings concerning the mill.
With all my heart, the landlord did say,
We'll have them drawn here, without more delay;
And if by your wife any children I have,
I mean to maintain them, rich, fine, and brave.
And when I die, they my substance shall share,
To keep them hereafter, both gallant and fair.
Let, sir, quoth the miller, it will be a jeer,
If that we in public do let it appear;
To save both our credits, and bring it to pass,
Have in the meadow a dairy, the ass.

That will appear better the bond to fill,
For the lend of the ass you might give me the mill.
Well said, quoth the landlord, that will end the strife;
But you know my meaning is for your wife:
Yes, sir, I allow what you say is true,
But this saves the credit of my wife and you;
It is not so much for my wife I do stand,
But for you who have proved so much my friend.
Now, miller, since you have granted me delight,
Pray who shall we get the bond to write?
The first man we see who doth come by,
Who can do the same. Then the parson drew nigh.
The landlord saw him, and to him he cry'd,
Here's a matter for you, kind sir to decide.
If that I can do it, the parson did say,
I'll use my endeavours without more delay.
Kind sir, said the landlord, 'tis a bond to fill,
That I to the miller give a water-mill.
And quit him the rent for two years past,
And all for the lending to me his she-ass.
That is a good act, sir, the parson did say,
Now, miller, you and yours are bound to play.
For your landlord's eternal felicity sure,
Since he has not turned you out of door;
But quits you the rent, and gives you the mill,
Now you may live happy, sir, if you will.
This said, he to writing the bond did begin,
And the landlord for wine of the best did call in;
So the bond being writ, it quickly was sign'd,
And before all witnesses it was resign'd.
To him and his heirs the mill was to pass,
And all for the lending to me his she-ass.
The miller, the bond in his pocket did put,
Taking leave of him home he did trot;
He whistled and sung all the way he did go.
And when he came home to his wife he did show
The bond, and discover'd the matter at large,
Said he, Now, my dear, we are free from the charge.
PART II.
THE gentleman he was as brisk as an eel,
And in his lower tear some courage did feel:
Thought he, O my bargain some use I may lack,
And immediately sent for his man Jack;
And when he came he gave him a glass,
Saying, Go to the miller now for his she-ass.
And when that is done conduct her safe home,
And take her into the very best room;
Then mass her fire, my orders to compleat,
Give her wine to drink, and fowls to eat;
And when that is done come back and tell me
How she with her delicates seem to agree.
Kind sir, said the servant your will shall be done,
And down to the miller he hastily run;
Saying, Miller, strange news is here come to pass,
My master has a mind to your she-ass:
I must have her home, and give her good cheer,
And the like of an ass you never did hear.
The miller smiled but nothing he said,
But taking a halter went down to the mead;

And leading her up to the servant he said,
Take heed with good diet the Ass you feed;
She is tender Mouth'd, and bones she can't crack,
Pray give her a toast well soaked in Sack.

The servant said, Miller, I doubt there is fun,
But what he has order'd, shall surely be done;
And leading the Ass, he homeward did go,
Unto the House-keeper, and gave her to know
His master's commands, and how it must be.
Which soon was performed with great decency.

Then said the house-keeper unto the maid Bess,
Pray go to the door and lead in the guest,
Come make a brisk fire, and sweep out the hall,
For now it becomes a she Ass's stall.
But the wine and the fowls we'll keep for our pain,
For our guest is dumb and cannot complain.

When this was done, Jack said I must run,
For I long to see the end of the fun;
When he came to his master, he whisp'ring said,
Sir, all your commands are justly obey'd.
Well, how did she take it, his master did cry'd?
Is she with good living, my boy satisfy'd?

Said Jack, I am sure she can take nothing ill,
For I think before she ne'er liv'd so well;
No matter for that, his master did cry.
Was she willing to come? did she not seem shy?
I could not perceive it, but she was agreed,
For she came along with me with speed.

That's well, said the master, my counsel now keep,
I fancy by this, time she wants to sleep;
Go to the house-keeper, bid her make the bed,
With clean holland sheets, and the best coverlid;
Give my love to my Jewel, and desire her to go
Up into the room, and respect to her show.

And farther my Service send to the house-keeper
I desire a clean holland shift she would give her,
With a suit of good pinners pray let her be dress'd,
And when she's in bed let all go to rest.
But you must sit up, lad, for to let me in,
Now keep but your council, my favour you'll win.

PART III.

SOON homewards Jack run like a Man amazed,
And when he came on the house-keeper gazed;
Saying, Madam your charge is come at last,
You must make the bed, and dress up the Ass
With a fine holland-shift, and pinners also,
And the best of respects you unto her must show.

The house-keeper and servants laughed amain,
Saying, see our Master's in a merry vein;
Then the Old Ass they began to array,
With a fine holland shift and pinners so gay,
Then hauled her up with her pinners so neat,
Into the warm bed laid the lady's four feet.

The Ass being laid, they all went to rest,
But now comes the end and cream of the jest.
The gentleman having of wine drank his fill,
He homewards return'd with heart and good will,
To embrace the charms of the miller's wife,
Whom he did love as dear as his life.

And being come home he knock'd at the gate
An up Jack arose, who for him did wait;

And let in his master, who thus to him said,
Jack, 'tis no disalter if I go to bed.
Do you think she's asleep? Yes, sir, so I suppose,
For it is long since she lay down to repose.

What did the house-keeper and servant-maids say?
Did they my commands most freely obey?
Yes, sir, they did in every degree,
Then I'll go to-bed; so good night to thee.
Sir, will you have a candle brought into the room?
No, I'll go to-bed by the light of the moon.

When he came in he sat himself down,
Close by the bed side when the Ass gave a groan;
He said, My dear jewel, what are you asleep?
Into your embraces I quickly will creep.
You know I have bought thee with a free good will
I've forgotten the rent, and gave you the mill.

And if are loving and kind unto me,
This shall not be all I will give unto thee.
You shall be my Jewel, my love, and delight,
We'll revel all day, and sport all the night;
So into bed he did tumble amain,
But the Ass gave a kick, and kickt him out again:

What the devil is it in the chamber, said he?
Said Jack, 'Tis the Ass the miller gave me;
O villain, and worst of rogues! he cry'd,
For this affront I will be satisfy'd.

He went up, and the Ass down stairs did kick,
Saying, Go to your master, the seed of Old Nick,
When the bed was shifted he took his repose.
Next morning in wrath to the miller he goes.

Thou rogue of a miller how came it to pass,
Instead of your wife, you sent me your Ass.
Said the miller, Kind sir, do you think that I will
Let you cuckold me, for the use of your mill?
For what have I done I have right on my side,
And witness secure, so I thank you beside.

The gentleman found he was bit of the mill,
And cursing the miller, with hearty good will,
He home return'd to his house-keeper, and said,
For your smock and pinners you shall be paid.
Pray all keep you council, ne'er mention this thing,
And for this ass-flesh I'll not draw writings again.

The Ass which o'er night he sent prancing away,
Was found by the neighbours the very next day,
Drest up in her pinners like a lady fair,
Which made all the country gaffers to stare.

With a fine holland smock hung over her hide,
Then they held it convenient the Ass should be cry'd
The crier being sent for, to work he did go,
O Yes, he did cry; does any one know
To whom these pinners and smock does belong.
For this jaid of an Ass has done them much wrong.
She's a thief, and has stole them, 'tis very plain,
And ought to be try'd for her life for the same.

The miller came and the Ass did own,
Saying, for the smock and pinners 'tis known,
They for my wife's wearing were all design'd,
By my landlord who is both loving and kind.
So they gave them the miller to give to his wife,
And the Ass came off, and not try'd for her life.